

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. Claim 2-6 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1 and 14 have been amended. Support for these amendments is found, for example, in the specification at pp. 8-9 and in original claims 2, 6, and 14.

Claims 1 and 7-21 are pending. No new matter has been added.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-5, 7-11, and 15-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,112,667 ("Li") in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,956,447 ("Denommee"). The Examiner contends that the combination of Li and Denommee teaches all the features of the claimed invention.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate features from canceled claim 6, and thus specifies that the notches and cutouts to be laminated are formed in such a manner that cut edges in a center side are spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another. The Examiner acknowledges that Li is silent with respect to this feature. *See* Office Action at p. 6. Denommee does not cure the deficiency of the primary reference because it likewise fails to disclose this feature. Consequently, neither Li nor Denommee provides any hint that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to produce a molded article using a method having all the features presently claimed. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

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Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Li in view of Denommee and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 4,990,207 ("Sakai"). The Examiner contends that the combination of Li, Denommee, and Sakai teaches all the features of the claimed invention.

The rejection of claim 6 is moot because this claim has been canceled. Furthermore, the remaining pending claims are not obvious over any combination of Li, Denommee, and Sakai because, *inter alia*: (i) Denommee does not disclose two pressing steps, as called for in the pending claims; (ii) Sakai does not disclose notches and cutouts having cut edges in a center side that are

spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another between respective prepregs; and (iii) Sakai does not disclose a continuous plurality of notches or cutouts formed from a center portion to outer circumference in respective prepregs.

First, in the presently claimed invention, both steps (3) and (4) involve a pressing step – i.e., pressing portions (partially separated flaps) of the molded article in the first pressing step, and forming the final molded article by pressing the residual portions on the molded article in the second pressing step, thereby producing a three-dimensional molded article. In contrast, and contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Denommee does not disclose a two-step compression molding process, but instead discloses two stages of degassing that occur in a compression molding procedure. Since pressing and degassing are wholly different process steps, Denommee fails to disclose or suggest a method that uses two pressing steps, as called for in the pending claims. Neither Li nor Sakai cures this deficiency in Denommee.

Second, in the presently claimed invention, notches and cutouts of respective prepregs to be laminated have cut edges in a center side spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another. In other words, a cut edge of a notch of one prepreg is spaced apart from a cut edge of a notch of another prepreg at a distance of 2 mm or longer. Hence, the distance is measured between prepregs. In contrast, Sakai discloses notch to notch spacing within a single prepreg (col. 4, lines 57-64). In Sakai, the notch to notch spacing at a distance of 2-30 mm refers to adjacent notches formed on the same prepreg and provides no information as to what distance might be suitable between notches when a plurality of prepregs is used. Given the foregoing, Sakai does not disclose notches and cutouts having cut edges in a center side that are spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another between respective prepregs, as called for in the pending claims. Neither Li nor Denommee cures this deficiency in Sakai. Moreover, this feature found in the present invention provides a specific and significant benefit to overall product quality (e.g., appearance, strength, etc.) that one of ordinary skill in the art would not reasonably expect based on the disclosures in Li, Denommee, and Sakai. *See, e.g.*, Specification at p. 8, last paragraph; and p. 21, last paragraph.

Third, in the presently claimed invention, the notches and cutouts are continuous from a center portion to the outer circumference in respective prepregs. This feature helps to produce a three dimensional article because the continuous edges of the notches and cutouts are laminated, helping to prevent wrinkles, suppress thickness differences, and improve overall quality. In contrast, Sakai discloses notches formed intermittently in a prepreg. *See, e.g.*, Sakai at Figs. 1 and 3. Since continuously formed and intermittently formed notches are wholly different, Sakai fails to disclose or suggest a method that uses continuous notches or cutouts formed from a center portion to outer circumference in respective prepregs, as called for in the pending claims. Neither Li nor Denommee cures this deficiency in Sakai.

For at least the foregoing reasons, the pending claims are not obvious over any combination of Li, Denommee, and Sakai. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

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Claims 12 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Li in view of Denommee and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 3,547,764 ("Amerongen"). The Examiner contends that the combination of Li, Denommee, and Amerongen teaches all the features of the claimed invention.

Claim 1 has been amended to specify that the notches and cutouts to be laminated are formed in such a manner that cut edges in a center side are spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another. The Examiner acknowledges that Li is silent with respect to the cut edges in a center side of the notches and cutouts being spaced at a distance of 2 mm or longer from one another. Neither Denommee nor Amerongen cures the deficiency of the primary reference because each likewise fails to disclose this feature. Additionally, as discussed above, the presently claimed process includes two pressing steps (i.e., steps (3) and (4)), whereas Denommee merely discloses two stages of degassing that occur in a compression molding procedure. Neither Li nor Amerongen cures this deficiency in Denommee. In short, none of the cited references provides any hint that

would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to produce a molded article using a method having all the features presently claimed; and Applicant respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered and that all pending claims be allowed and the case passed to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining, which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,

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